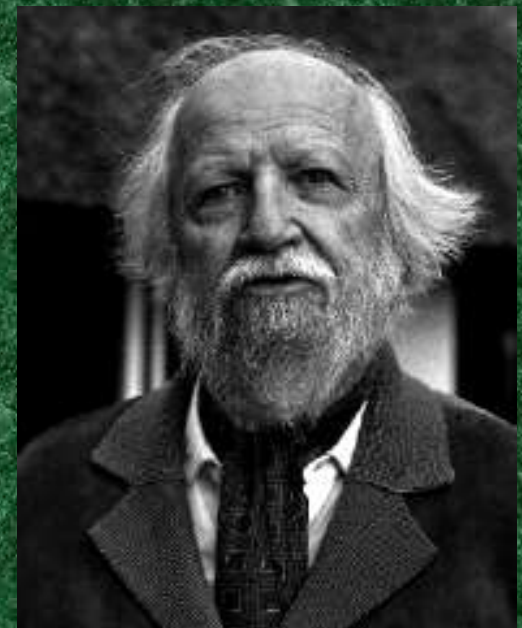
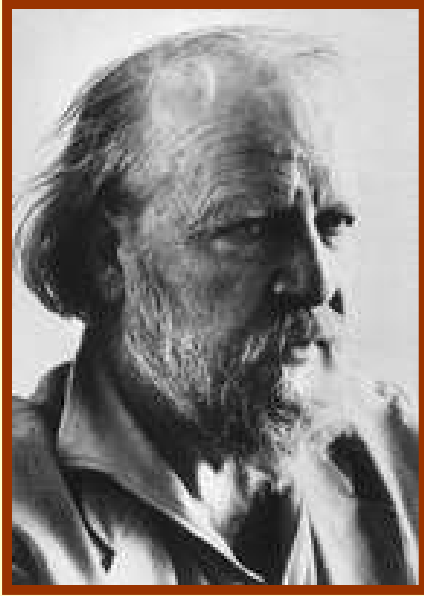


Lord of the Flies



By William Golding





William Golding

William Golding was born in Cornwall in 1911 and was educated at Marlborough Grammar School and at Brasenose College, Oxford.

Apart from writing, his occupations included being a schoolmaster, a lecturer, an actor, a sailor, and a musician.

His father was a schoolmaster and his mother was a suffragette. He was brought up to be a scientist, but revolted against this expectation.

After two years at Oxford he read English literature instead, and became devoted to Anglo-Saxon. He spent five years at Oxford. He published a volume of poems in 1935.



Golding joined the Royal Navy in 1940 and spent six years afloat, except for seven months in New York and six months helping Lord Cherwell at the Naval Research Establishment. He saw action against battleships (at the sinking of the Bismark), submarines and aircraft.

He finished as Lieutenant in command of a rocket launcher. He was present off the French coast for the D-Day invasion, and later at the island of Walcheren.

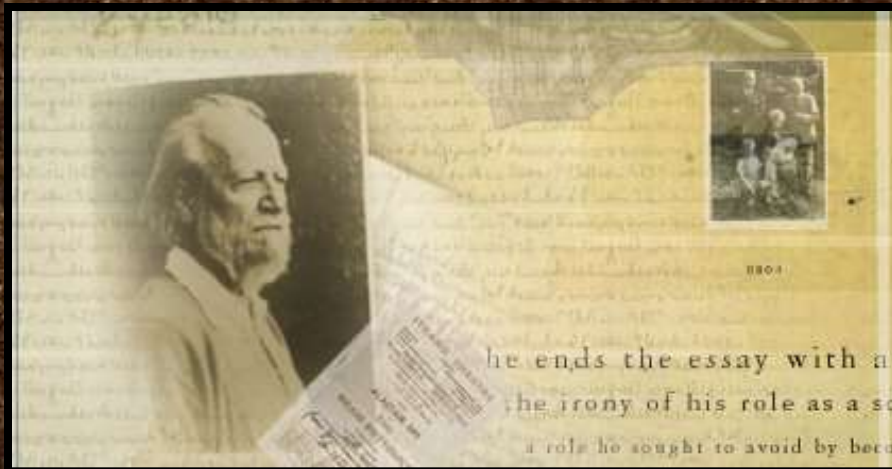
He witnessed firsthand the terrible destructive power of man operating during war, essentially outside the restrictive limits of society. With war as his tutor, he began to view man, instead, as a creature with a very dark and evil side to his nature.



Golding believed that our humanity rests in the capacity

- 1. to make value judgments and**
- 2. the power to decide this is right, that wrong, this ugly, that beautiful, this just, that unjust.**

After the war, he no longer believed in the inherent innocence and goodness of mankind. Golding once said that “man produces evil as a bee produces honey”.



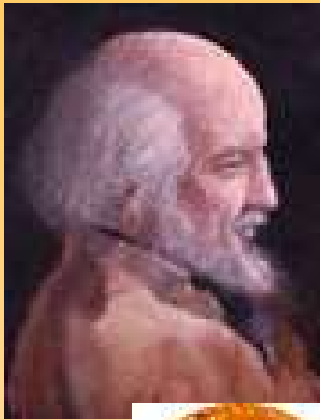
**“My yesterdays walk with me. They keep step, they are gray faces that peer over my shoulder.”
(William Golding)**

After the war he returned to teaching, and began to write again. *Lord of the Flies*, his first novel, was published in 1954.

In his disturbing writings, he emphasizes

- **the necessity of self-awareness**
- **the need to look evil in the face**
- **the need to root out self-deception.**





William Golding was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1983...”for his novels which, with the perspicuity of realistic narrative and the diversity and universality of myth, illuminate the human condition in the world of today.”



He said the following in his speech at the banquet for Nobel Prize recipients:

I came to Sweden characterized as a pessimist, though I am an optimist...

Then let me use what I suppose is my last minute of worldwide attention to speak not as one of a nation but as one of mankind. I use it to reach all men and women of power. Go back. Step back now. Agreement between you does not need cleverness, elaboration, manoeuvres. It needs common sense, and above all, a daring generosity. Give, give, give!

It would succeed because it would meet with worldwide relief, acclaim and rejoicing: and unborn generations will bless your name.

Lord of the Flies

William Golding's first novel, *Lord of the Flies*, 1954, rapidly became a world success and has remained so. It has reached tens of millions of readers.



The novel, loosely based on the novel *Coral Island* by Ballantyne in 1858, tells the story of a group of British School boys who are stranded on a South Sea island. Their struggles to form a society which will survive until their rescue forms the basis of the plot.

Two Concepts of Man

(1) At the time of the writing of *Coral Island*, many believed in the “Romantic Concept of Man”: that man is born in innocence but it corrupted by an evil environment.

At this time (the 19th century), it was commonly believed that British boys, like British men, would always behave well, no matter what crisis they were facing. The boys in *Coral Island* (Ralph, Jack, and Peter) stranded on the island, triumphed over the adversity facing them and even converted some of the natives to Christianity.



(2) Theory of Original Sin:

Although he used the basic plot of *Coral Island*, in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding went further in his analysis of good and evil in mankind. He revealed his concept of the essential nature of man. The boys are presented as typical of human nature.

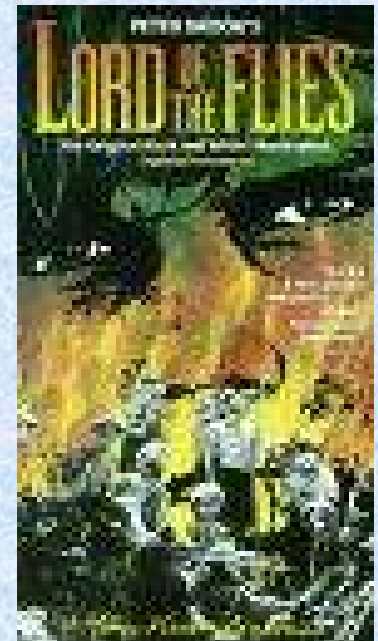
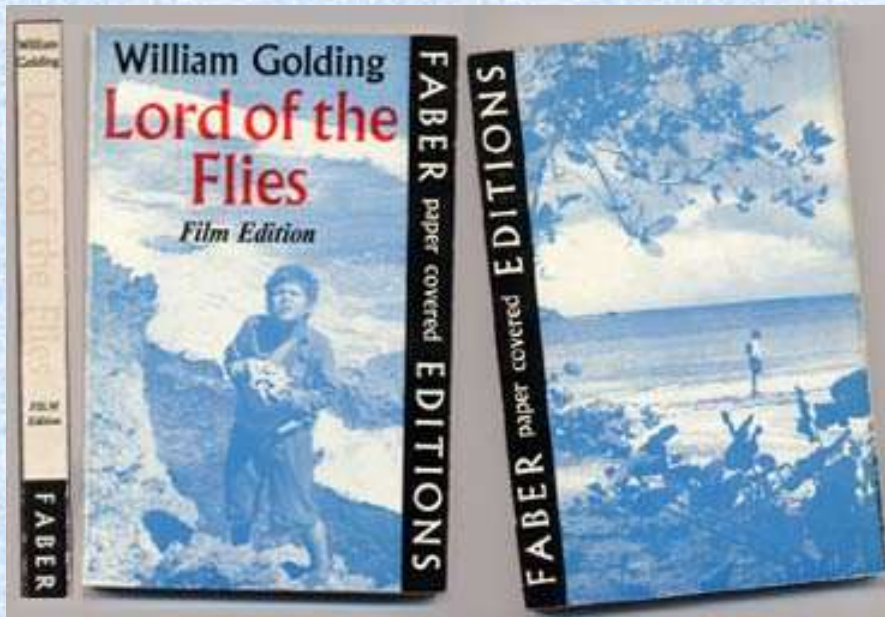
Ie. Man is born as a neutral creature, a creature who can be either good or evil according to the circumstances of his life. He does have the capacity for “evil” (something universally condemned such as murder).



In Golding’s novels, man has free will: the choice to do good or to do evil. Because of our inborn tendency to do evil, we find it easier to do evil than to do good, and we don’t exercise our right to choose good as often as we might.

Golding's own explanation for the breakdown of civilization in *Lord of the Flies* was delivered in a lecture given in 1962 at the University of California at Los Angeles.

He describes the breakdown as resulting from nothing more complex than the inherent evil of man: "So the boys try to construct a civilization on the island; but it breaks down in blood and terror because the boys are suffering from the terrible disease of being human" (Golding, "*Lord of the Flies as Fable*" 42).



THEMES AND IDEAS IN *Lord of the Flies*

The theme [of *Lord of the Flies*] is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable – *William Golding*



Issues dealt with in the novel:

Good and evil – human nature

The need for civilization

Innocence and the loss of innocence

Illusion and reality

Power

Fear of the unknown

The indifference of nature

Blindness and vision

Leaders and followers

Survival





Terms to Know:

1. **Utopia** – an imaginary world in Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) where people enjoy the utmost perfection in law, politics etc. This is a perfect, peaceful society.
2. **Dystopia** – the opposite of an idyllic world—a “hell on earth”.
3. **Idyllic** – charmingly simple and peaceful
4. **Allegory** –revelation of an abstract or spiritual meaning through concrete or material forms. A symbolic narrative. An allegory can be read on two levels.
5. **Archetype** – the original model or pattern after which others are made.

In literature, many of our archetypes come from Judeo-Christianity or Greco Roman mythology.

6. Microcosm – a “miniature world” which mirrors the world at large.



7. Atavism – a return of characteristics which have been absent for many generations. (A return to primitive man?)

8. Primal – the first or original

9. Innate – inherent in the essential character of someone